

# **NATIVE GRASS PLANTINGS FOR VERMONT**

## **Supplement for Grassland Reserve Program**

**7/23/03**

**Native Warm Season Grasses:** Warm season native grass is expensive and sometimes difficult to obtain. Warm season grasses are much more difficult to establish than cool season grasses. Successful establishment is only possible on soils having less than 15 percent fines (silt and clay) passing the #200 sieve and are deep and moderately well drained or better. Soils meeting this criteria are the **coarse textured outwash and ablation till soils with soil textures that are loamy fine sand or coarser**. Establishment is very difficult on finer textured soils because of the stiff competition from cool season grasses and broadleaf plants which flourish as a result of favorable moisture levels and cool temperatures.

Warm season grass seed is sold and planted based upon pure live seed pounds (PLS lb.). This means that the total weight of the seed is adjusted for the inert material and the dead seed in the given lot.

**Native Cool Season Grasses:** Not much work has been done in the past to collect and propagate native cool season grasses. Most native cool season grasses are expensive and hard to obtain.

**RECOMMENDED SEEDING RATES:** Choose at least 3 native grasses **plus** a legume to assure a successful planting.

**Well to excessively drained, coarse textured soils:**

Switchgrass (Blackwell, Shelter) 2 lbs. PLS  
Big Bluestem (Niagra, Kaw) 2-3 lbs. PLS  
Indian Grass (NE-54, Rumsey) 2 lbs. PLS  
Little Bluestem (Aldous, Camper) 1 lb. PLS  
White Clover (Dutch White or Wild White) (with inoculant) 3 lbs.

**Well drained, fine sandy loam and finer textured soils or  
Less than well drained soils:**

Deertongue (Tioga) 2 lbs.  
Virginia or Canada Wild Rye 5 lbs.  
Canada Bluejoint 2 lbs.  
Redtop (Streaker, Common) 1 lb.  
Sheep's Fescue (Bighorn) 5 lbs.  
White Clover (Wild White or Dutch White) (with inoculant) 3 lbs.

## Practice Establishment Criteria

**Fertilizer and Lime:** Fertilize and lime according to soil test results. Refer to a current soil test (one that is less than 5 years old) to determine pH, phosphorus, and potassium levels. The pH needs to be 5.5 or higher. If pH is below 5.5, apply 1 to 1 ½ tons of lime per acre to the surface prior to seeding. Where grasses are to be seeded alone or where legumes are less than 50% of the stand, apply 20-40 pounds of N per acre through the drill or by broadcasting onto the surface prior to seeding. If the soil tests low in phosphorous and/or potassium, apply 30 pounds each of P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> and/or K<sub>2</sub>O through the drill or by broadcasting onto the surface prior to seeding. If conventional seeding is being done, apply lime and fertilizer to the soil surface prior to the final tillage (disking).

**Seeding:** Plant .25" to .50" deep in firm, weed free seedbed as early in spring as possible before May 15<sup>th</sup> (June 1<sup>st</sup> in Aroostook County). Compact light fluffy soil with a roller prior to drilling. Clovers need to be inoculated. A drill type planter is recommended. A specially designed native grass seed drill is recommended for the fluffy seeds of the Bluestems and Indian Grass. If a conventional or no till drill is not available, then the seed may be broadcast and incorporated with a very light disking. Compaction needs to be done with a cultipacker (tines raised) or a heavy roller.

**Weed Control:** Unwanted cool season vegetation needs to be controlled during the first year or two of establishment by periodic mowing just above the growth height of the grass plantings. This is critical for the warm season grass plantings, and may be needed in other plantings if quackgrass or unwanted herbaceous species become a problem.

**Common grazing practices**, including maintenance and necessary cultural practices, is permitted on the land in a manner that is consistent with maintaining the viability of grassland, forb, and shrub species common to the locality. Timely spot mowing or spot chemical treatment is permitted to control unwanted herbaceous vegetation such as bedstraw.

**Haying, mowing, or harvesting for seed production**, is permitted subject to appropriate restrictions during the nesting season for birds in the local area that are in significant decline or are conserved in accordance with Federal or State law. Mow as needed between August 1<sup>st</sup> and August 30<sup>th</sup> to avoid disturbing nesting ground birds and to control unwanted woody and/or herbaceous vegetation and to maintain grass cover. Timely spot mowing or spot chemical treatment is permitted to control unwanted herbaceous vegetation such as bedstraw.

REFER TO: **Vegetating with Native Grasses in Northeastern North America**  
USDA NRCS and Ducks Unlimited.  
Also Ecological Tech ref. #2.

## **SOURCES OF NATIVE GRASS SEED**

Arrow Seed Co.  
Box 722,  
Broken Bow, NE 68822  
308-872-6826

**Joe Beebe**  
**RD 4,**  
**Towanda, PA 18848**  
**717-265-6536**

**Ernst Conservation Seeds**  
**9006 Mercer Pike,**  
**Meadville, PA 16335**  
**800-873-3321**

Cenex Seed Co.  
PO Box 1061,  
Grand Island, NE 68801  
308-384-1111

Marvin Clark,  
Box 444, Paola, KS  
913-294-4041

Gammagrass Seed Co.  
Rt1, Box 111A,  
Falls City, NE 68355  
402-245-5842

Horizon Seeds  
Box 81823,  
Lincoln, NE 68503  
402-475-1232

Manglesdorf Seed Co.  
PO Box 327, 4500 Swan Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63166  
314-535-6700

Ohio Seed Co.  
PO Box 87,  
West Jefferson, OH 43162  
614-879-8366

Osenbaugh Grass Seeds  
RR 1, Box 106,  
Lucas, IA 50151  
515-766-6476

**Seeds Inc.**  
**307 Horsham Rd.,**  
**Horsham, PA 19044**  
**215-675-2186**

**Seedway**  
**Box 250,**  
**Hall, NY 14463**  
**716-526-6391**

Shepard Farms  
RR 1,  
Clifton, MO 65244  
816-261-4567

Sharp Seed Co.  
RT 4, Clinton, MO 64735  
816-885-8521

**Southern Tier Consulting Inc.**  
**2701-A, RT 305, PO Box 30**  
**W. Clarksville, NY 14786**  
**716-968-3120**

**Stanford Seed Co.**  
**RR1, Box 320,**  
**Denver, PA 17517**  
**215-267-3805**

BM Stegall  
Box 227, RT 1,  
Abingdon, IL 61410

Dean Stevens Farm  
RT 1, Box 45  
Hiawatha, KS 66434  
913-742-3699

Stock Seed Farms  
28008 Mill Rd.,  
Murdock, NE 68407-2350  
402-867-3771

Wildlife Nurseries Inc.  
PO Box 2724  
Oshkosh, WI 54903-2724  
414-231-3780